

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 081245

NODIS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

FOL RPT BEIRUT 2905 ACTION SECSTATE 2 APR QUOTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2905

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: SITUATION ASSESSMENT

1. WE HAVE A PRECARIOUS CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON. PRE-
CARIOUS BECAUSE ITS MAINTENANCE IS REALLY IN THE HANDS
OF HOT-HEADED KIDS WHO STARE AT EACH OTHER WITH DEEP
HATRED ACROSS NARROW STREETS. THEIR LEADERS ARE NOT
LEADERS IN THE SENSE WE THINK. THEY ARE THEMSELVES
ALMOST VICTIMS OF THE MURDEROUS VIOLENCE THEY UNLEASHED.

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THEY REALIZE THAT 90 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY IS FED UP

WITH BLOODSHED AND DESTRUCTION WHICH BY NOW HAS REACHED INTO PRACTICALLY EVERY LEBANESE HOME. BUT THEY ARE CAPTIVES OF THEIR TROOPS. THIS MEANS IT COULD ALL START AGAIN ON ALMOST ANY PRETEXT. IT ALSO MEANS THAT EACH SUCCESSIVE DAY OF RELATIVE CALM ENHANCES THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CEASEFIRE HOLDING AND THE POLITICIANS GETTING TO WORK ON SOLVING THE PROBLEMS. LEBANESE POLITICIANS ARE NOT PARTY LEADERS OR REPRESENTATIVES BUT WAR-LORDS, IN TAILORED SUITS. THEIR CULTURED VENEER IS RATHER THIN AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF GIVE-AND-TAKE MINIMAL. MOST EMPHASIZE THE TAKE. UNDER THE THREAT OF A POSSIBLE SYRIAN INVASION AND CONTINUED BLOODSHED THROUGH THE COUNTRY THEY ARE MOVING TO ELECTING ANOTHER PRESIDENT (RAYMOND EDDE SEEMS TO BE FRONT RUNNER, AT LEAST TODAY) AND GETTING ON WITH IT. BUT A CONTINUED CEASEFIRE MAY TEMPT THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR WAYS OF THE PAST AND THIS WON'T DO.

2. I'VE TRIED IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS TODAY TO GET ACROSS POINT THAT IMPORTANT TASK IS TO GET GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED AND TURN IMMEDIATELY TO QUESTION OF LAW AND ORDER, SPECIFICALLY CREATION OF CONTROLLABLE SECURITY FORCES AND THEREAFTER PUT SOME REAL WORK ON URGENT SOCIAL MEASURES TO RELIEVE THE BITTERNESS WHICH AT BASE OF PROBLEM HERE, ENFLAMED OF COURSE BY PALESTINIANS, IRAQIS, LOCAL COMMUNISTS AND YOU NAME IT.

3. I'VE MADE THE POINT THEY CAN'T CONTINUE OLD WAYS AND, SAY, THROW OUT A NEW PRESIDENT ONCE FRANGIE IS GONE. THAT CARD WILL HAVE BEEN PLAYED. I'VE ALSO SAID THEY CAN'T COUNT ON A MILITARY COUP AS TEMPORARY MEASURE. THAT CARD WAS ALSO PLAYED AND TRUMPED.

4. AS FOR SYRIA I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO DISAGREE WITH KING HUSSEIN. IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HOLD OFF FOR A WHILE. INTERVENTION AT THIS MOMENT WOULD ONLY ALLOW EVERYONE HERE TO THROW UP HIS HANDS AND
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SAY DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE ELSEWHERE. AND FRANKLY, I'M NOT TOO SANGUINE ABOUT THE SYRIANS ABILITY TO DO THE JOB QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY. THEIR TRACK RECORD IS NOT THAT GOOD.

5. IN SHORT, WE SHOULD RUN AROUND LIKE MAD DURING THIS HIATUS, TRYING TO LENGTHEN IT, AND GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT WITH EFFORT AND SACRIFICE BY SOME,

LEBANESE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PULL THIS OFF. IT'S
I'M AFRAID. A SLIM CHANCE BUT PROBABLY WORTH TAKING.

6. ABOVE IS PREDICATED ON CEASEFIRE HOLDING AND IT
NOT AT ALL SURE AS I'VE TRIED TO SAY. ALL THE NOISE WE
HEAR NOW CAN'T BE COMING ONLY FROM KIDS CELEBRATING
THE CEASEFIRE.
BROWN UNQUOTE
KISSINGER

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